



## **RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES**

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September 28, 2005

Hon. Mike Johanns  
Secretary of Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Johanns:

We enjoyed meeting you at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Association of Latino/Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers conference in Las Cruces, NM. We were the apple grower delegation from Washington State.

The experience was very important for the farmers that we represent. They were very impressed with the number of Latino farmers that attended and even more impressed with the dialogue that transpired amongst them at the conference. We feel very fortunate in being part of the large group.

Several of our farmers gave testimony at the 2007 Farm Bill listening session. We have yet to see that listening session posted on the web site. We are anxious to see the summation of the recommendations and the response by USDA.

In particular, we have three points that are very important to the farming operations in Washington State:

1. Since there is a new generation of farmers and the future farmers of American (I do not mean FFA), it calls for a paradigm shift to new innovative programs that will work with community based organizations that can serve as equal partners. Presently, the distribution of funding and technical assistance resources is not making adequate strides in meeting the shifting demographics and therefore inequitable.

2. Because of the above, Rural Development funds should be made more readily available to community based organizations to help build capacity to support this new generation of American farmers. Funding and the support for cooperative development is needed to meet the marketing and financial management needs of the new and emerging farmers. Marketing on a group level is of primary importance if the new generation of farmers is to survive in this competitive world economy. There needs to be equitable distribution of RD funds for capacity building.

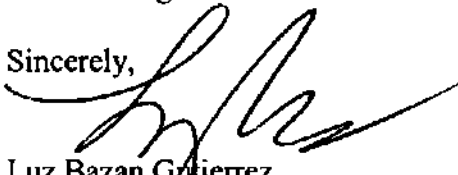
3. The FSA loan application processing needs to be streamlined and expedited. Based on the information we received, FSA gave out \$133,763,000, but how much of that went to minority or limited resource farmers?

When FSA deems the application complete continues to pose a time barrier. The applications are taking more than 60 days, because the employment verification of many of the new farmers, who also hold multiple other farm work jobs, delays the process. The fact that verification is supposed to be processed by FSA delays the processing.

CBO's can do a better job of doing this type of work, since they live and work in the community that they serve, so maybe they need to get reimbursed for doing the job for FSA. USDA does not have a system in place to hire more bilingual loan officers or bilingual staff due to lack of local supervisors to outreach outside of their sphere of people they know. By contracting some outreach services to CBO's, the services can be made available to all the new and emerging farmers, who are readily able to hire the right people needed to service the customers.

Thank you being part of the National Conference and we hope you will share this information with appropriate persons. We look forward to a true partnership in working with a new generation of American farmers.

Sincerely,



Luz Bazan Gutierrez  
President & CEO

cc: NALHFR Board



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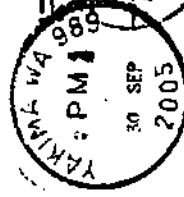
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